

**Executive Committee for Highway Safety
Older Driver Safety
Working Group Meeting Minutes – Mtg. #4**

April 4, 2006

Location:

NC AARP, Raleigh @ 11:00 a.m.

Attending:

Jane Stutts, Chair	UNC Highway Safety Research Center
Suzanne LaFollette-Black	NC AARP
Stacie Cruz	NC Governor's Highway Safety Program
Davis Fort	Physician, retired
Frank Hackney	NC Governor's Highway Safety Program
Janice Huff	Family Medicine Physician (representing NC Medical Society)
David Munday	NC State Highway Patrol
Susan Stewart	NC DMV Driver License Medical Review Branch
Bill Turner	AARP Driver Safety Program
Carol Williams	NC Assistive Technology Program
Frank Winecoff	Engineer, retired

Minutes:

Following a welcome and brief self-introductions by those attending, Jane Stutts reviewed the agenda for the meeting and asked for any additions or changes. She also noted that the group would try to schedule future meetings for times other than the first week of the month, since this time conflicts with NC DOT board meetings (and hence the absence of Cliff Braam and Kevin Lacy).

In the absence of Kevin and Cliff, Frank Hackney was able to provide some insight into potential opportunities for funding for older driver safety initiatives under SAFETY-LU, the recently passed transportation re-authorization legislation (see copy distributed with meeting announcement). Frank said that although the legislation allows state DOTs to dedicate up to 10 percent of their apportioned funds to further the implementation of an approved strategic highway safety plan, North Carolina is not likely to qualify for such because it has unmet railroad crossing and infrastructure safety needs related to its highway safety improvement projects. He noted, however, that SAFETY-LU specifically authorizes appropriations to improve traffic signs and pavement markings consistent with FHWA's *Guidelines and Recommendations to Accommodate Older Drivers and Pedestrians*. The latter has been a focus area for our group. Frank recommended that we follow up with Kevin about this potential source of funding, while noting that clarification was still pending on many of the specific requirements of SAFETY-LU.

Jane Stutts also informed the group that David King would be retiring as DOT Deputy Director at the end of June, and consequently would no longer be chairing the ECHS. His replacement has not yet been announced.

Task I – Discussion of Strategies for Presentation to the ECHS

Jane asked Dr. Fort to provide an update on the status of the group's intersection signage strategy, a draft of which has been circulated. Dr. Fort indicated that the roadway group would be meeting soon to finalize the strategy. (That meeting has since been scheduled for April 27.) Jane volunteered to help prepare the final version of the strategy following ECHS guidelines. Dr. Fort noted that the strategy may overlap with another strategy dealing more broadly with approach signage that another working group is proposing. If so, we will want to coordinate our efforts with that working group. The roadway subcommittee will follow up on this possibility.

To help kickstart the process of identifying other potential strategies to present to the Executive Committee, Jane had prepared drafts of three strategies for consideration and discussion by the group. One of these was also roadway related, and had to do with building capacity among state and local engineers and planners by hosting FHWA *Highway Design Handbook for Older Drivers and Pedestrians* Practitioner Workshops, reviewing state standards to determine their compatibility with the Handbook's recommendations, and continuing to analyze state crash data to identify locations that pose a particular risk to older drivers and take appropriate steps (based on the recommendations in the Handbook) to remedy them. There was some discussion of the value of specific (like the intersection/interchange strategy above) versus broad (like the capacity building strategy here) strategies, with some general consensus that both are needed. The group decided to move forward with the intersection strategy and to let the roadway subcommittee decide whether to also submit some version of the capacity building strategy, either simultaneously or at some later point in time.

There was also some discussion of a strategy to educate physicians about how medical conditions and the aging process can affect driving ability, and the role that physicians can play in helping to ensure driving fitness. Susan Stewart noted that the DMV Medical Review Branch had updated its *North Carolina Physician's Guide to Driver Medical Evaluation* and would like more physicians to be familiar with the Guide. In response to the Working Group's stated objectives of identifying at-risk older drivers, Jane had prepared a draft strategy to train physicians to identify drivers with medical or functional limitations that can affect their driving ability. There was some discussion of how best to accomplish this goal and the most appropriate roles for physicians, the DMV, and others. Dr. Janice Huff provided insight to how physicians typically receive continuing education training, and the importance of targeting the right specialties (in this case, most likely family medicine, internal medicine, neurology, and ophthalmology). She indicated that various state association meetings and conferences might be an appropriate venue for presenting the need for such training, but that the training itself would need to be provided independently and through a variety of means (e.g., audiotapes or online courses). Dr. Huff will follow up with the NC Medical Society to learn what resolutions may already be in place regarding the physician's role in promoting driver safety and whether any further action might be recommended by our group.

Finally, there was some discussion of a more general strategy to increase public awareness of issues affecting older drivers and available resources for maintaining safe mobility. In particular, there was discussion of the highly successful “Granddriver” public awareness campaign, initially piloted in Washington D.C. through a partnership between NHTSA and the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators, and subsequently implemented statewide in Florida and Virginia. The Virginia program has been especially well received, and there was some discussion of inviting Janet Honeycutt-Schaefer with the VA Department of Aging to speak to our group about the program. Jane said she would investigate the possibility, but noted that the lack of travel funds may pose a problem. There was also brief discussion of the potential value of a website for disseminating information and materials about older driver safety.

Task II – Updates and Discussion of Other Coalition Activities

Suzanne LaFollette-Black reported that tentative dates had been set for conducting Safe Mobility for Seniors workshops in four additional communities: Southern Pines (June 15 or 20), Greensboro (June 22), Waynesville (August 24) and Raleigh (August 30). She also noted that Audrey Straight, national coordinator for AARP’s Mobility Options program, was interested in attending and participating in these workshops. The education and toolkit subcommittee will be scheduling a meeting to plan for these workshops, and will also consider ways to incorporate this type of activity into a possible strategy for consideration by the ECHS.

Susan Stewart noted that in-service training for all DMV examiners had not yet been rescheduled, but that there was a movement towards providing more specialized training (e.g., in assessing driving ability for medically at-risk drivers) to a smaller subset of examiners. Also, the DMV is considering sending examiners to drivers’ homes to road test them in more familiar driving environments and making greater use of mobile units in more rural settings. There was a general discussion of the value of helping older adults make the decision to stop driving on their own, when possible, instead of the DMV taking away their license. Bill Turner noted that this was something that AARP’s Driver Safety course emphasized, and that at least some number of people taking the course decide afterwards to give up their license.

Suzanne reminded the group that abstracts for next fall’s NC Conference on Aging are due April 21 and suggested that our group might consider proposing a workshop on the broader topic of senior mobility and invite key people at the national level and from other states to learn more about what is being done elsewhere that could be replicated here in NC.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:00 pm.

Action Items

Name	Item
Roadway Subcommittee	Meet prior to the next full meeting of the Working Group to finalize the intersection signage strategy. Send to Jane for formatting and distribution prior to the meeting. Make a recommendation to the group regarding the proposed capacity building strategy.

Education/Toolkit Subcommittee	Schedule a meeting to plan for upcoming workshops.
Janice Huff	Follow up with NC Medical Society regarding the status of any resolutions regarding older driver safety.
Jane	Confirm next meeting location and time with Sarah Davis.
ALL	Review draft strategies and propose any changes or additional areas of emphasis.